Indo-US joint war exercises in Agra

104. SHRI AIMADUDDIN AHMED KHAN (DURRU): Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Indian and Special Forces troops from the United States conducted joint war games in the backyard of the Taj Mahal in Agra; and

(b) if so, the salient features and the main objectives of the exercises and the outcome thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) A joint Indo-US exercise was conducted from May 7—27, 2002, involving joint para-drop at the designated dropping zone in Agra. The para drop was conducted for training in interoperability and to inculcate the advantages of the techniques and technology employed by US Forces.

Indigenous production of arms

105. SHRI NANA DESHMUKH: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that as per the report of Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) India ranks fifth among the first ten countries in the world in import of armaments in the year 2001;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the concrete steps being taken to produce more arms indigenously ?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) No, Sir. As per Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Year Book 2001, India ranks sixth among the first ten countries in the world in import of armaments.

(b) In order to meet strategic requirements, it is necessary to import high-tech equipment of right capability.

(c) Defence Research & Development Organisation is engaged in indigenous development of weapons and weapon systems to be manufactured

in Indian Ordnance Factories, Defence Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) etc. Besides this, Transfer of Technology and licenee manufacture or imported equipment is also taken up in Ordnance Factories, Defence PSUs etc.

Delay in induction of Sukhoi Jets in IAF

106. SHRI RAMACHANDRA KHUNTIA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) the reasons for delay in expeditious induction of the latest Sukhoi Fighter aircrafts in the Indian Air Force;

(b) the steps taken by Government to reduce the induction time; and

(c) by when the requisite number of Sukhoi MKI aircrafts will be inducted in the Indian Air Force ?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERN ANDES): (a) Coordination problems during the development phase of the aircraft, due to the multinational nature of the project, caused some delay in the induction of the Sukhoi-30 aircraft in the Indian Air Force

(b) The project is regularly reviewed in high level joint meetings and technical problems faced are sorted out.

(c) One batch of aircraft has been received and induction of the remaining aircraft ex-rmport is likely to be completed by December, 2003.

Indo-Russia joint defence production

107. SHRI P. PRABHAKARREDDY: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-report published in the 'Asian Age' dated 4th May, 2002 under the caption, "India moots joint defence production with Russia";

(b) if so, the details thereof; and.

(c) the specific advantages which would accrue to India in adopting joint programme of development and production of defence equipment with Russia ?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES) (a) to (c) Starting from the early 1960s, Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and erstwhile Soviet Union have entered into licence production programme